

## Message Text

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11

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 AID-20 OMB-01 IO-12 CIAE-00 PM-09 H-02

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15

USIA-12 PC-04 RSR-01 SR-02 ORM-03 /124 W

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R 190350 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5347

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

DOD

CINCPAC

CINCPACREPPHIL

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DEFENSE FOR DIA ALSO

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS/ PINS, MOPS, RP

SUBJECT: MUSLIM DISSIDENCE IN SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES

REF: MANILA 517 4

BEGIN SUMMARY: SECURITY SITUATION IN SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES  
REMAINS SERIOUS. VIOLENCE HAS PICKED QY SOMEWHAT IN PAST  
TWO WEEKS, WITH GROWING NUMBER OF TERRORIST ATTACKS ON  
CIVILIANS. COTOBATO ( NORTH) PROVINCE REMAINS CENTER OF  
FIGHTING WHILE SULU ARCHIPELAGO ALMOST COMPLETELY CONTROLLED  
BY REBELS. NUMBER OF REFUGEES STILL INCREASING. GOP  
HAS ANNOUNCED RELEASE OF FUNDS FOR MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE  
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PROJECTS IN MUSLIM PROVINCES. EFFORTS TO PERSUADE REBELS LAY DOWN ARMS CONTINUING BUT STILL WITHOUT SUCCESS. POSSIBLE DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS TO PUT END TO EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE TO DISSIDENTS, IF SUCCESSFUL, COULD REPRESENT FIRST STEP IN WHAT WOULD STILL BE LENGTHY PROCESS OF REACHING SOLUTION OF PRESENT CRISIS. END SUMMARY.

1. SECURITY SITUATION IN SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES REMAINS SERIOUS. THERE ARE NO SIGNS THAT REBELS ARE LESSENING THEIR MILITARY ACTIVITY OR THAT ARMED FORCES OF PHILIPPINES ( AFP) OPERATIONS ARE HAVING MUCH LASTING EFFECT ON RESTORING PEACE IN AREA. DURING PERIOD MAY 1-16, FROM BRIEFINGS GIVEN DEFENSE ATTACHES AND EMBOFFS BY PHILIPPINE CONSTABULARY ( PC) L/ COL SAN ANDREAS, A TOTAL OF 82 INCIDENTS HAVE OCCURRED IN PROVINCES OF COTABATO, ZAMBOANGA DEL SUR, ZAMBOANGA DEL NORTE, BUKIDNON, DAVAO ORIENTAL, SULU AND BASILAN ISLAND. THIS NUMBER REPRESENTS 25 PERCENT OF ALL INCIDENTS REPORTED BY AFP TO EMBASSY SINCE PRESENT PHASE OF FIGHTING ERUPTED MARCH 1.

2. TWO RECENT DEVELOPMENTS ARE INCREASING FREQUENCY OF TERRORIST ACTIONS BY REBELS AGAINST UNARMED CIVILIANS, PRESUMABLY CHRISTIANS, AND GROWING SHARE OF TOTAL CASUALTIES ON GOVT SIDE BEING SUFFERED BY MEMBERS OF ARMED CIVILIAN GROUPS. THESE LATTER, CALLED BARRIO SELF DEFENSE UNITS ( BSDU' S) BY THE AFP, ARE LOCAL UNTRAINED MILITIA PROVIDED WEAPONS BY GOVT AUTHORITIES.

3. GREATEST INCIDENCE OF FIGHTING CONTINUES TO TAKE PLACE IN POPULOUS COTABATO ( NORTH) PROVINCE. MAP PROVIDED BY AFP BRIEFER ON MAY 18 SHOWS REBEL STRENGTH STRONG IN 16 OF 33 MUNICIPALITIES IN PROVINCE, LARGELY IN SW, SE AND CENTRAL AREAS OF PROVINCE. STRIKES BY JET AIRCRAFT, AT TIMES USING NAPALM, AND BEAVER SINGLE ENGINE AIRCRAFT USING SMALL ROCKETS ARE FREQUENT.

4. IN TWO ZAMBOANGAS NUMBER OF INCIDENTS HAS INCREASED IN PAST TWO WEEKS. VIOLENCE HAS BEEN CENTERED IN TOWNS IN WESTERN SECTION OF ZAMBOANGA DEL SUR AND HAS DISTINCT CHRISTIAN VS MUSLIM OVERTONES. ACCORDING AP REPORT WHICH AFP BRIEFING OFFICER UNABLE CONFIRM, 98 PERSONS, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MOSTLY CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM CIVILIAN, WERE KILLED IN

MUNICIPALITY OF NAGA IN FIRST TWO WEEKS OF MAY. 18 OTHER CIVILIANS KILLED IN TWO SEPARATE INCIDENTS SAME PERIOD. ON BASILAN ISLAND FREQUENCY OF FIGHTING HAS DECLINED, BUT SEVERAL ARMY BATTALIONS HAVE NOT YET BEEN ABLE TO CLEAR AREA OF REBELS.

5. SITUATION IS LARGELY UNCHANGED IN SULUS, WHERE GOVT CONTROL REMAINS LIMITED TO PROVINCE CAPITAL AND TWO MILITARY INSTALLATIONS. GOVT FORCES, STRONGLY OUTNUMBERED AND OUTGUNNED BY REBELS IN THIS AREA, HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO TAKE OFFENSIVE. AT SAME TIME, REBELS ONLY OCCASIONALLY ATTACK GOVT POSITIONS. AFP BRIEFING OFFICER CANDIDLY ADMITTED ON MAY 18 THAT TAUSUGS COULD TAKE PROVINCIAL CAPITAL OF JOLO WHENEVER THEY WISH. REBELS REPORTEDLY RECENTLY BURNED HOME OF GOV MURPHY SANGKULA WHO IS ACTING AS GOVT INTERMEDIARY TRYING TO FIND PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT FOR HIS PROVINCE.

6. ARMY BATTALION FLOWN FROM COTABATO HAS NOW REOCCUPIED TARRAGONA, DAVAO ORIENTAL, CAPTURED BY REBEL GROUP ON EASTER SUNDAY, BUT REBELS REMAIN IN AREA. TWO LANA O PROVINCES REMAIN QUIET YET TENSE AS MARANAO MUSLIM GROUPS, WHICH ARE STILL WELL- ARMED, HAVE REFRAINED FROM JOINING REBELLION. IN BUKIDNON ON MAY 5 ARMED REBELS BURNT 30 HOUSES AND KILLED 6 CIVILIANS IN THREE INCIDENTS IN TOWN ONLY 15 MILES SOUTH OF CAGAYAN DE ORO. THIS LIMITED FIGHTING PLUS TENSION IN AREAS TO EAST AND SOUTH HAS RESULTED IN 20,000 REFUGEES NOW PRESENT IN THIS PROVINCE. OTHER AREAS OF MINDANAO ( ZAMBOANGA CITY, DAVAO CITY AND MOST OF EASTERN MINDANAO) ARE QUIET.

7. AFTER TEN WEEKS OF WIDESPREAD FIGHTING IN SOUTH, TOTAL NUMBER OF CIVILIANS DISPLACED CONTINUES TO INCREASE. ACCORDING DEPT OF SOCIAL WELFARE SOURCE, MORE THAN 200 ,000 REFUGEES WERE OFFICIALLY REGISTERED AT END OF APRIL AND MANY MORE HAVE SOUGHT REFUGE WITH FRIENDS AND RELATIVES. GOVT IS CONTINUING EFFORTS TO MEET IMMEDIATE NEEDS OF REFUGEES, BUT THERE ARE REPORTS THAT HEALTH AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FINANCIAL CONDITION OF REFUGEES IN SOME AREAS HAS SHARPLY DETERIORATED.

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 AID-20 OMB-01 IO-12 PC-04 CIAE-00 PM-09

H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01

SS-15 USIA-12 SR-02 ORM-03 RSR-01 /124 W

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R 190350 Z MAY 73

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5348

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8. IN OTHER DEVELOPMENTS, GOP ANNOUNCED ON MAY 16 THAT IT HAS BEGUN TO RELEASE FUNDS FOR MAJOR ROADBUILDING PROJECTS IN MINDANAO AND SULU. ACCORDING PRESS REPORTS, EVENTUAL COST OF THIS LONG- TERM PROGRAM WILL EXCEED \$100 MILLION, MUCH OF WHICH IS BEING PROVIDED BY ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK. IN TWO COTABATO PROVINCES IMPROVEMENT OF HIGHWAY BETWEEN COTABATO CITY AND GENERAL SANTOS IS REPORTEDLY SCHEDULED TO COMMENCE IN JUNE, WITH CONSTRUCTION TO BE DONE IN THREE SECTIONS BY TWO AMERICAN AND ONE KOREAN FIRMS. GOP HAS ALSO ANNOUNCED APPROACH TO IBRD FOR FINANCING FOR BROAD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IN CENTRAL MINDANAO.

9. GOVT EFFORTS TO COMMUNICATE WITH REBEL LEADERS CONTINUE, ALTHOUGH WITHOUT VISIBLE SIGNS OF SUCCESS TO DATE. ON MAY 7 PRESIDENT MARCOS MET IN MANILA WITH 36 MOSLEM RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND TEACHERS FROM SULU AND URGED THEM  
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TO PERSUADE REBELS TO COOPERATE WITH GOVT. MARCOS SAID HE IS WILLING TO CONSIDER GRANTING AMNESTY TO ANY REBELS WHO SURRENDER THEIR WEAPONS. ACCORDING MAY 11 PRESS, PRESIDENT HAS SENT FORMER CONGRESSMEN BARBERO, NAVA NO

AND VALDEZ, ASSISTED BY FORMER SENATOR TAMANO AND FORMER CONGRESSMAN DIMAPORO, BOTH MARANAO MUSLIMS, TO COTABATO TO NEGOTIATE PEACEFUL SURRENDER OF REBELS. MARCOS ALSO URGED COTABATO GOVERNOR CAJELO TO ASSIST NEGOTIATIONS AND WARNED THAT, WITHOUT RESTORATION OF LAW AND ORDER IN

PROVINCE, MAJOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS CANNOT BE STARTED.

10. COMMENT: INALL RESPECTS THE SITUATION IN THE SOUTH REMAINS VERY SERIOUS. AFP' S LIMITED RESOURCES MAKE IT MOST UNLIKELY THAT MILITARY MEANS WILL ENABLE GOVT TO REASSERT LASTING CONTROL OVER AREAS PRESENTLY DOMINATED BY REBELS. ALTHOUGH GOP APPEARS SINCERE IN ITS DESIRE TO UNDERTAKE LARGE- SCALE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS TO BENEFIT MUSLIMS, SUCH EFFORTS TAKE TIME TO PRODUCE RESULTS, CANNOT BE CONDUCTED IN ABSENCE OF LOCAL SECURITY, AND, UNTIL FULLY UNDERWAY, WILL BE DISBELIEVED AS VACANT PROMISES BY MUSLIM POPULATION. REPORTED ONGOING DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS TO DEAL WITH EXTERNAL SOURCES OF SUPPORTS FOR REBELS THEREFORE ASSUME INCREASING IMPORTANCE. IF SUCCESSFUL, THIS WOULD REMOVE IMPORTANT STIMULUS TO DISSIDENT MOVEMENT AND COULD REPRESENT FIRST STEP ON WHAT WOULD STILL BE A LONG ROAD TOWARD RESTORATION OF SOME SEMBLANCE OF NORMALITY IN THIS TROUBLED REGION.  
BYROADE

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\*\*\* Current Handling Restrictions \*\*\* LIMDIS  
\*\*\* Current Classification \*\*\* LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

## Message Attributes

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